

A condition of Divine Blessing

J.R. Miller:

There is a secret of living which, if people knew it, would make all life easier for them. It may be stated thusâ€”that as we take up any duty and go forward with itâ€”we shall receive the strength which we need to do it. There are several divine promises that give this assurance. One reads, "As your daysâ€”so shall your strength be." This seems to mean that the help which God gives varies according to the necessity of the particular day. When we have abundance of ordinary human strength, we do not need so much special divine help, and God then gives less. Really it is always God's strength which we have, whether it is what we call natural, or whether it comes in supernatural way. When we have human friends about us, with sweet companionships, we do not need so much the revealing of the divine presence and the companionship of the unseen Friend; but when we lose the human friend, then we need the divine more deeply; and in our loneliness, God makes himself known to us as never before. So it is in all our experiences. God fits his blessing to our days. When we faint, he increases strength. When we are sorrowful, he gives comfort. When we are in danger, he grants protection. When we are weary, he gives rest. "As your days, so shall your strength be."

Another of the promises reads, "My grace is sufficient for you." Every word of this assurance shines with radiant light. It is Christ's grace which is sufficient. We know that he has all divine fullness, and therefore we are sure that no human need can ever exhaust his power to give help. It is Christ's grace which is sufficient. If it were anything else but grace, it might not give us such comfort. Grace is undeserved favorâ€”goodness shown to the unworthy. We deserve nothing, for we are all sinners. But it is grace which is sufficient for each oneâ€”"for you," the promise runs; and that means each one who reads it or hears it. It is present tense, too,â€”"is sufficient." Christ is always speaking personally to the one who is in any need, and saying, "My grace is sufficient for you." Then the word "sufficient" is one whose meaning expands and amplifies with the measure of the need. No necessity is so small as not to be included, and none is so great as to go beyond the capacity of the blessing which is promised.

There are divine words, also, which imply that the supply of blessing that we receive, will depend upon ourselves. God's people in ancient times were commanded to cross the Jordan, the promise being that the steam would divide for them. Yet the waters would not have parted for them if they had not gone forward in the obedience and faith. As a matter of fact, it was only when the feet of the priests, walking in advance, were wetted in the rushing floodsâ€”that the stream began to sink away. When Jesus was ready to send forth his disciples to bear his gospel, his command was, "Go into all the world." Then came the promise, "And lo! I am with you all the days." The promise is very preciousâ€”but we cannot separate it from the command. We cannot have this blessed presence unless we are, in our own way, to the measure of our own ability, seeking to make disciples of all nations. It is when we go out in his name, that he will be with us.

This is the unvarying law of spiritual blessing and good. Life lies before us, with its burdens, its duties, its responsibilities, its struggles, its perplexities. It does not come to us all in one piece. God breaks our years into months and weeks and daysâ€”and never gives us more than just a little at a timeâ€”never more than we can bear or do for the day. Then if we take up the present duty or burden, we shall always have strength to do it. If we have enough of our own natural strengthâ€”and that is God's strength tooâ€”he does not need to give us his special strength; for why should anything so precious as strength be wasted? But if we do not have strength of our own sufficient for the work or struggle, we need not falterâ€”but should go on, just as if we had omnipotence in our arm; for the promise is that if we honor God by obeying him, though the task be impossible to our ability, he will honor us by giving us all the help we need. The river will surely open when he has bidden us to cross it, if only we move on as if there were no river. The bread will surely be given when we enter the wilderness, following the divine leading, if only we go on as if we had abundance of provision.

But we must not forget that the blessing which is promised, depends upon our faith and obedience. If we do not begin the task which seems impossible, if we wait to receive the help before we will begin itâ€”the help will never come. If we do not begin our march toward the river, waiting until it opensâ€”it will not open at all. If we do not enter upon the struggle, waiting for strength to be given for the battle before we accept itâ€”we shall never get the strength. An old proverb says, "Get your spindle and they distaff ready, and God will send the flax." Yes; but he will not send the flax unless we get the spindle and the distaff ready. We must do our part, thus proving our faith, or God will not do what he has promised, for his promise is conditional. Another old proverb says, "For a web begun, God sends the thread." We must take up the scant bundle of threads we have, and begin our weaving, confident that the Lord will provide threads as we go on, enough to finish the web. He will never put his threads into folded, waiting hands.

There are thousands of good people who do almost nothing with their life because they are waiting for God to

send the thread before they will begin to weave the web of duty which he bids them to weave. They say, "I want to be useful; I want to do good; but God has not given me anything to work with." Now, the truth is, that God has given them enough to begin with, and which is all he will give them at first. There were only five barley loaves, and there were five thousand hungry people. What were these among so many? But for the web begun God sent the thread that day. There was only a little meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse, and there were years of famine yet to be passed through. But again for the web begun "God sent the thread."

The teaching is for us, and it is one of the most practical lessons we can learn. Put your hands to the tasks which are surely yours, never asking whether you are able to do them or not, and not waiting for God to provide all the strength or all the material you will need, before you begin to do them. Whatever is your duty must be done, no matter how far beyond your strength it may be. It is yours to begin; it is God's to help you through; and he will, if you honor him by trusting him.

Those who live lives of great usefulness have always begun with the little they had. It grew in their hands, until they filled a large sphere of usefulness, touching many lives with the blessing of their helpfulness. For a web begun "God sent the thread."

The same law of human diligence and divine blessing, prevails in the building up of character. Ten lepers cried to Jesus for healing. He answered, bidding them go and show themselves to the priest. That was what the law required lepers to do after they had been cured, when the priest would give them a certificate of health and cleanness, permitting them to return again to society. These lepers were not yet cured. Their bodies showed no mark of healing. But they promptly obeyed the Master's word; and "as they went they were cleansed."

There are those who long for a beautiful life, for a transformed character "but it seems they never can attain to such renewal, they are so full of faults and blemishes. But if they begin to follow Christ, starting with the little fragment of Christ-likeness which their hands can pick up, God will help them, and they will grow at last into rich beauty of soul. Get the victory over the one temptation of the hour, and that will be the first thread in a web of complete victoriousness. Get one little line of loveliness into your disposition, and that will be the beginning of a spirit which at last will include, "whatever things are lovely." For a web begun "God will send the thread."

There is a beautiful Eastern story of a child walking beside the sea, who saw a bright jewel lying in the sand. She stooped down and picked it up, and found it was attached to a fine thread of gold. As she drew this out of the sand there were other bright jewels on it. She drew up the gold thread, and wound it about her neck, and around her head and her arms and body, until from head to foot she was covered with the bright threads of gold, and sparkled with the brilliance of the bright jewels. So it is when we lift out of God's Word an ornament of beauty to put into our life. We find that other fragments of loveliness, all bound together on the golden chain of love, and are attached to the one we have taken up. Then as we draw up the chain and entwine it about our neck, and weave it into a web to make a garment for our soul, we find that it is endless. Infinite as God himself, is the abundance of the lovely things which we may draw out of the treasury of his grace to deck our life with beauty. "For a web begun "God sends the thread."

This same law applies in the learning of all life's lessons. The divine teaching is never lacking; but we must ever begin the lesson with the little we know. We must take the one step which is plain to us, and then God will make plain the next step for us, and the next, and the next. We must not demand to know all the way before we will set out. We must trust Christ, and go on, even in the dark. We must never falter when there seems to be no path; as we go on it will open. As we do the will of God, we shall know the teaching. When we begin the web "God will send the threads to weave it to the beautiful ending."